

## Chapter 4 MORE ABOUT GREECE

### THE LAND

Geographically, Greece belongs to Europe since it forms the southern tip of the Balkan Peninsula.



**Tyros, Arkadias, in Peloponnesus region, 1995**

Greece consists of a peninsula and many islands. The Greek peninsula includes mainland Greece: Central Greece, Thessaly, Epirus, Macedonia, Thrace, and the Peloponnesus which is part of the mainland although its name means *the island of Pelopos*.

In modern days Peloponnesus was separated from the rest of the mainland by a man made narrow canal. Euboea, on the other hand, is an island joined to the mainland by a bridge. The two largest Greek islands are Crete and Euboea. Greece includes many islands. Many of the Greek islands are in groups, such as the Cyclades, the Sporades, and the Dodecanese islands in the Aegean Sea, and the Ionian islands in the Ionian Sea. The length of the Greek coastline is estimated at 15,000 kilometers. But Greece has more than a lot of beautiful coastline. There are high mountains and farmland in mainland Greece, as well as in some of the large islands, such as Crete.

### RELIGION

The Church of Greece [Εκκλησία της Ελλάδος] is an Orthodox Church, and it is the established church of the country. It holds a place of supreme importance in the life of the nation. Among no other people is the identity of church and state more thoroughly rooted. The church has exerted great power in Greece throughout its history and continues as a dominant force in modern Greece. Over 96% of the population of Greece belongs to the Orthodox Church whose official name is *Church of Greece*.



The church has played an important role in preserving the language, traditions, arts, and national identity of the Greek people. For more information about the Church of Greece, as well as other denominations in Greece, see Chapter 7, p.77.

### ETHNIC GROUPS

Most of the population of Greece is Greek. In spite of foreign domination, Greeks have maintained a strong ethnic identity, their language, their religion, and pride in their past. But Greeks are not the only ethnic group in Greece. Minorities constitute only about three percent of the population.

However regardless of what ethnic group they were, they were considered Greek citizens, and are included in the Greek civil records, although they may also be listed in their own church records.



**House built in 1877, Pelasgia, Fthiotidos**

The minorities are concentrated in the northern regions that were historically inhabited by mixed populations and subjected to many foreign invasions. In 1923 large population exchanges with Turkey and Bulgaria brought in an additional 1,525,000 Greeks and removed large numbers of Turks and Slavs from the country. Pockets of Turks and Slavs were left in Thrace and Macedonia after these population exchanges. Other minorities include Vlachs, Jews, Armenians, Albanians, and Gypsies.

### **Turks**

Turks form the largest minority group in Greece. The Turkish population in Greece during the four centuries of Ottoman rule was not large. It was composed mostly of government officials, soldiers and agricultural landowners. These were driven out of the lands that Greece successfully obtained during the Wars of Independence. When Greece gained territory from Turkey in 1913 and 1919 many Turks came under Greek rule. In 1923 some half million Turks

living in Greece were exchanged for one and half million Greeks from Turkey.

In Greece today there are only about 250 thousand Turks. Most of these are Moslems but about half of the Turks remaining in Greece today are Greek Orthodox.

Most of the Turks are tobacco farmers on the plains of Thrace. A few thousand are residents of the Dodecanese Islands, acquired from Italy in 1947.

### **Slavs**

Slavic tribes did not settle in the area of Macedonia until the sixth century A.D., and they lived there during the centuries of Turkish rule. There are Christian Slavs, and Moslem Slavs. In the population exchange of 1923 some 25 thousand Greeks were exchanged for 50 thousand Slavs. The few remaining Slavs in Greece are located almost entirely in Greek Macedonia.



**The inside of a traditional gate of a village home, built with rocks in 1887; so strong that it was almost impossible to demolish**

### **Vlachs**

The Vlachs are a group of uncertain origin. They reside mainly in the Pindus Mountains

in northern Epirus, western Macedonia, and northwestern Thessaly. Their language has many Latin roots. The term *vlach* is an ancient designation used since the fourth century A.D. to denote Roman provincials. The Vlachs call themselves the "Aromani." It is speculated that the Vlachs are descendants of ancient Romans or from Greeks who were closely tied to the Romans in ancient times.

The Greek term *vlachoi* is almost synonymous to shepherd because the Vlachs are mostly shepherds. In the winter they descend from the mountains to seek pasture for their flocks and work for themselves. About 40 thousand Vlachs are in Greece today.



A Greek lady police officer writing a ticket for traffic violation, Athens 1993

### **Albanians**

Albanians came into Greece in the fourteenth century and thereafter. The Byzantine rulers recruited Albanians as mercenaries, and rulers of the Duchy of Athens invited Albanians to colonize in Attica and Voiotia.

Greeks of Albanian descent and of Greek Orthodox religion now reside mainly in rural areas near Athens, the northeastern Peloponnesus, and on the nearby Aegean islands. These Albanians have been largely assimilated into the Greek population. Most

are now entirely Greek-speaking, but some still speak Albanian in the home.

### **Armenians**

Armenia was an ancient kingdom lying between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea, northeast of Asia Minor, now included in Turkey, Iran, and the former Soviet Union. Since the demise of their kingdom, the Armenians have spread into Turkey, Syria, and Greece and throughout the world. Armenians began settling in Greece before the eleventh century A.D.

After the Greek War of Independence, the Armenians of Greece rapidly adopted the language and culture of the Greeks and intermarried with them. Most of the Armenians in Greece today are refugees or descendants of refugees Armenians who fled Turkey into Greece in 1895-96, in 1914-1918, and in the 1920s. The Armenian community in Greece kept their own records as well. Some of these records have been microfilmed, and are available at the Family History Library.



Street of Thessaloniki (Salonika), 1992

### **Jews**

Jews have been in Greece in small numbers since ancient times. Thessaloniki (Salonika) was the center of Jewish activity in Greece.

However Jewish communities were found in other cities of the country especially those cities that were centers of commerce.

In the thirteenth century Ashkenazic Jews immigrated to Thessaloniki from Poland, France and Italy. But, the main influx took place in the fifteenth century and later as Sephardic Jews, expelled from Spain in 1492, were attracted by the religious tolerance offered under Turkish rule. The language they brought, Ladino - a modified form of Spanish, is still spoken by Modern Greek Jews.



**Rodos, the beautiful island of Dodecanese**

Many Greek Jews moved to Palestine after the First World War. Then the Jewish population was reduced from about 100 thousand to a few thousand during the Second World War. By 1943, most Jews had been forcibly removed to concentration camps in Poland. Most of these perished in the Holocaust. The few remaining Jews in Greece are centered at Thessaloniki.

### **Gypsies**

The Gypsies are an independent, itinerant people who spread from the Middle East and the Balkans throughout Europe. They speak a language called Romany. Gypsies first appeared in Greece in the fourteenth century A.D. They generally adopted the religion of the rulers; Islam under the Ottomans. Greece has about 10 thousand Gypsies. The majority lead a wandering life, earning their

living in blacksmithing and other metal work, animal trading, fortune-telling, and public entertainment.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE**

The first administrative division of Greece took place on 3 April 1833. The land was divided in ten *nomos* [county], which were divided in 42 *eparhia* [district], and those in turn were divided into several *dimos* [municipality]. Subsequently the administrative structure of Greece went through many changes during the years. The most extensive changes took place in 1912, and 1999.



**The Town Hall of Pelasgia, Fthiotidos**

Today there are 52 *nomos* in Greece. Each *nomos* is divided into several *eparhias*. Each *eparhia* is divided in several *dimos*. Each *dimos* governs several towns. Before 1999 the large towns and cities were governed by a *dimos*, and the smaller towns were governed by a *koinotis* [community]. The *koinotis* in Modern Greek is called *koinotita*. A *koinotis* was governed by a local community president. A *dimos* [municipality] is governed by a local mayor. The *dimos/koinotis* [municipality] is **important** to your genealogical research because records were kept on that level, and you need to know the new *dimos* [municipality] to which your town belongs today, and to which town are stationed the

offices of that municipality [Town Halls] because this is where the old books have been transferred.

Traditionally Greece is divided into several regions:

Central Greece, Peloponnesus, Thessaly, Macedonia, Epirus, Thrace, Crete, Aegean Islands, Ionian Islands, Mount Athos.

Emigrants from Greece often refer to these regions. However the regions are not used for administrative purposes in Greece today, neither were the records kept on a region level.

Consequently the region **does not** play a significant role in your research.

These regions, like other localities in Greece, have different names in other languages. (See chapter 6, p.75.)

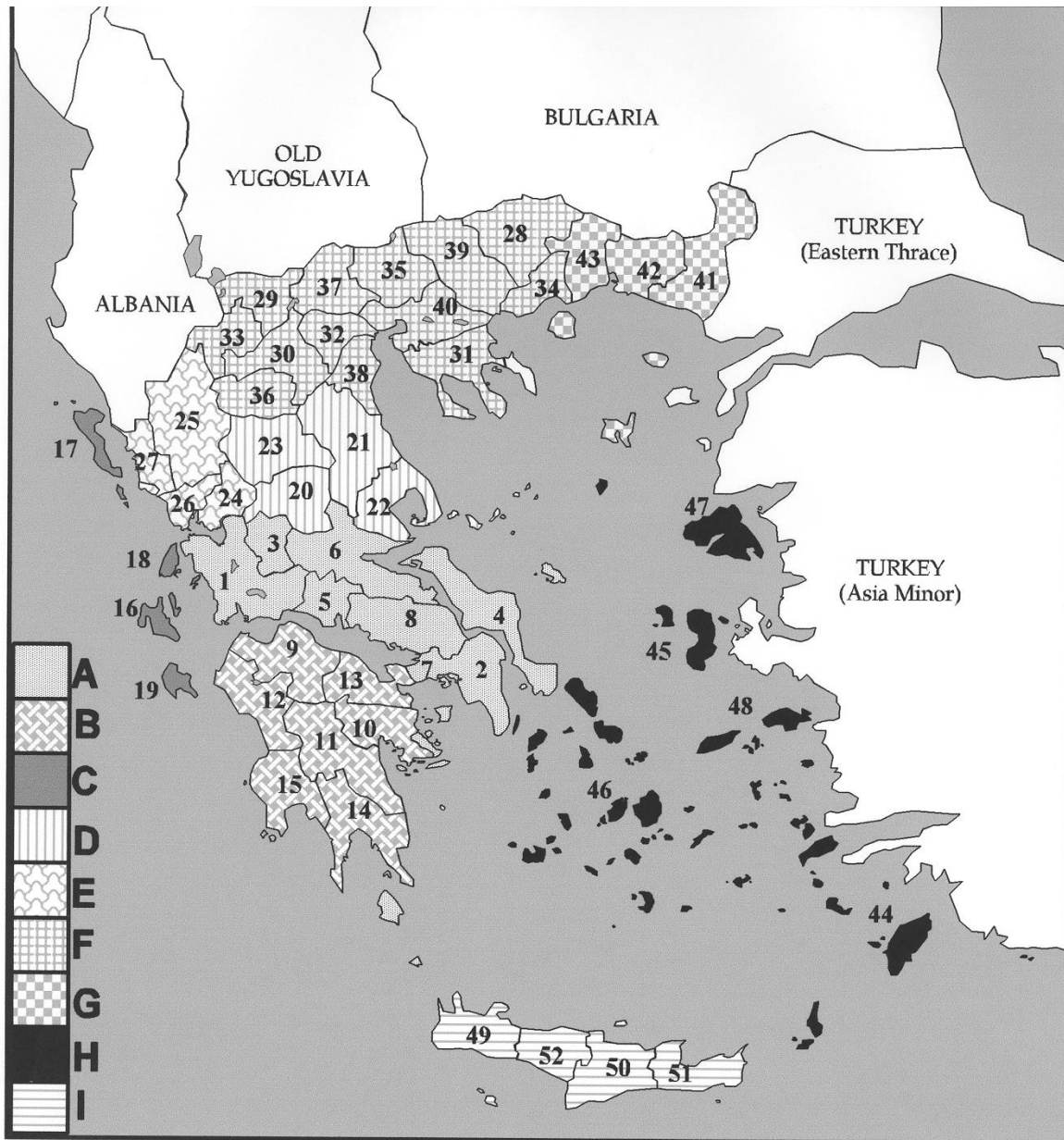
The following pages include a map showing the regions and counties of modern Greece and the explanation of the map.

On the explanation the names are given in transliterated Greek (Greek spelling with English letters). The region names are shown both in transliterated Greek and in English.



**Mosaic floor in Delos**

## ADMINISTRATIVE MAP OF GREECE



**EXPLANATION OF MAP:** The letters indicate the Regions with corresponding designs or shades. The numbers indicate the Counties [Nomos]. The peninsula colored white is Agion Oros Athos, it consists of monasteries, and has an independent government.

### **REGIONS**

- A. Sterea Ellas & Euvoia also called Roumeli [Central Greece and Euboea]
- B. Peloponnisos also called Morias [Peloponnesus]
- C. Ionioi Nisoi also called Eptanisa [Ionian Islands]
- D. Thessalia [Thessaly]
- E. Ipeiros [Epirus]
- F. Makedonia [Greek Macedonia]
- G. Thraki [Thrace]
- H. Nisoi Aigaiou [Aegean Islands]
- I. Kriti [Crete]

### **COUNTIES**

- 1. Aitolias & Akarnanias, 2. Attikis, 3. Eurytanas, 4. Euvoias, 5. Fokidos, 6. Fthiotidos,
- 7. Peiraios, 8. Voiotias, 9. Ahaias, 10. Argolidos, 11. Arkadias, 12. Ileias, 13. Korinthias,
- 14. Lakonias, 15. Messinias, 16. Kefallinias, 17. Kerkyras, 18. Leukados, 19. Zakynthou,
- 20. Karditsis, 21. Larisis, 22. Magnisias, 23. Trikalon, 24. Artis, 25. Ioanninon, 26. Prevezis,
- 27. Thesprotias, 28. Dramas, 29. Florinis, 30. Grevenon, 31. Halkidikis, 32. Imathias,
- 33. Kastorias, 34. Kavalas, 35. Kilkis, 36. Kozanis, 37. Pellis, 38. Pierias, 39. Serron,
- 40. Thessalonikis, 41. Evrou, 42. Rodopis, 43. Xanthis, 44. Dodekanisou, 45. Hiou,
- 46. Kykladon, 47. Lesvou, 48. Samou, 49. Hanion, 50. Irakleiou, 51. Lasithiou, 52. Rethymnis.



**The island of Ydra**

## CAPITAL CITIES OF COUNTIES

<u><i>Nomos (County)</i></u>	<u><i>Capital City</i></u>
AGION OROS <sup>1</sup>	Karyai
Ahaïas	Patrai
Aitolias & Akarnanias	Mesologgion
Argolidos	Nauplion
Arkadias	Tripolis
Artis	Arta
Attikis	Athinai
Dodekanisou	Rodos
Dramas	Drama
Eurytanias	Karpenision
Euvoias	Halkis
Evrou	Alexandroupolis
Florinis	Florina
Fokidos	Amfissa
Fthiotidos	Lamia
Grevenon	Grevena
Halkidikis	Polygyros
Hanion	Hania
Hiou	Hios
Ileias	Pyrgos
Imathias	Veroia
Ioanninon	Ioannina
Irakleiou	Irakleion
Karditsis	Karditsa
Kastorias	Kastoria
Kavalas	Kavala
Kefallinias	Argostolion
Kerkyras	Kerkyra
Kilkis	Kilkis
Korinthias	Korinthos
Kozanis	Kozani
Kykladon	Ermoupolis
Lakonias	Sparti
Larisis	Larisa
Lasithiou	Agios Nikolaos
Lesvou	Mytilini
Leukados	Leukas
Magnisias	Volos
Messinias	Kalamata
Peiraios	Peiraieus

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<sup>1</sup> Autonomous part of Greece consisted of monasteries.



**Nomos (County)**

Pellis  
Pierias  
Prevezis  
Rethymnis  
Rodopis  
Samou  
Serron  
Thesprotias  
Thessalonikis  
Trikalon  
Voiotias  
Xanthi  
Zakynthou

**Capital City**

Edessa  
Katerini  
Preveza  
Rethymnon  
Komotini  
Samos  
Serrai  
Igoumenitsa  
Thessaloniki  
Trikala  
Levadeia  
Xanthi  
Zakynthos

**CAPITAL CITIES OF DISTRICTS****Eparhia (District)**

Agias  
Agiou Vasileiou  
Aigialeias  
Aiginis  
Alexandroupoleos  
Almopias  
Almyrou  
Amariou  
Androu  
Apokoronou  
Argous  
Arnaias  
Artis  
Attikis  
Didymoteihou  
Dodonis  
Domokou  
Doridos  
Dramas  
Edessis  
Elassonos  
Eordaias  
Epidaurou Limiras  
Ermionidos  
Eurytanas  
Farsalon

**Capital City**

Agia  
Spilion  
Aigion  
Aigina  
Alexandroupolis  
Aridaia  
Almyros  
Amarion  
Andros  
Vamos  
Argos  
Arnaia  
Arta  
Athinai [Athens]  
Didymoteihon  
Ioannina  
Domokos  
Lidorikion  
Drama  
Edessa  
Elasson  
Ptolemais  
Molaoi  
Kranidion  
Karpenision  
Farsala

**Eparhia (District)**

Filiaton  
Florinis  
Fthiotidos  
Fyllidos  
Giannitson  
Gortynias  
Grevenon  
Gythiou  
Halkidikis  
Halkidos  
Hiou  
Ierapetras  
Ikarias  
Ileias  
Imathias  
Istiaias  
Ithakis  
Kainourgiou  
Kalamon  
Kalampakas  
Kalavryton  
Kalymnou  
Karditsis  
Karpethou  
Karystias  
Kastorias  
Kavalas  
Keas  
Kerkyras  
Kilkis  
Kisamou  
Ko  
Komotinis  
Konitsis  
Korinthias  
Kozanis  
Kranaias  
Kydonias  
Kynourias  
Kythiron  
Lagkada  
Lakedaimonos  
Larisis  
Lasithiou  
Leukados  
Levadeias

**Capital City**

Filiatai  
Florina  
Lamia  
Nea Zihni  
Giannitsa  
Dimitsana  
Grevena  
Gytheion  
Polygyros  
Halkis  
Hios  
Ierapetra  
Agios Kirykos  
Pyrgos  
Veroia  
Istiaia  
Ithaki  
Moirai  
Kalamata  
Kalampaka  
Kalavryta  
Kalymnos  
Karditsa  
Karpethos  
Karystos  
Kastoria  
Kavala  
Kea  
Kerkyra  
Kilkis  
Kissamos (Kastellion)  
Kos  
Komotini  
Konitsa  
Korinthos  
Kozani  
Argostolion  
Hania  
Leonidion  
Kythira  
Lagkadas  
Sparti  
Larisa  
Tzermiadon  
Leukas  
Levadeia

**Eparhia (District)**

Limnou  
Lokridos  
Maleviziou  
Mantineias  
Margaritiou  
Megalopoleos  
Megaridos  
Mesologgiou  
Messinis  
Metsovou  
Milou  
Mirampelou  
Mithymnis  
Monofatsiou  
Mylopotamou  
Mytilinis  
Naousis  
Naupaktias  
Nauplias  
Naxou  
Nestou  
Nikopoleos & Pargas  
Oitylou  
Olympias  
Orestiadou  
Paggaïou  
Paionias  
Palis  
Parnassidos  
Parou  
Patron  
Paxon  
Pediados  
Peiraios  
Pierias  
Plomariou  
Pogoniou  
Pylias  
Pyrgiotissis  
Rethymnis  
Rodou  
Samis  
Samothrakis  
Samou  
Sapon  
Selinou

**Capital City**

Myrina  
Atalanti  
Agios Myron  
Tripolis  
Margarition  
Megalopolis  
Megara  
Mesologgion  
Messini  
Metsovon  
Milos  
Neapolis  
Mithymna  
Pyrgos  
Perama  
Mytilini  
Naousa  
Naupaktos  
Nauplion  
Naxos  
Hrysoupolis  
Preveza  
Areopolis  
Andritsaina  
Orestias  
Eleutheroupolis  
Goumenissa  
Lixourion  
Amfissa  
Paros  
Patrai  
Paxoi  
Kastellion  
Peraieus  
Katerini  
Plomarion  
Delvinakion  
Pylos  
Voroï  
Rethymnon  
Rodos  
Sami  
Samothraki  
Samos  
Sapai  
Kantanos

**Eparhia (District)**

Serron  
Sfakion  
Sintikis  
Siteias  
Skopelou  
Soufliou  
Souliou  
Syrrou  
Temenous  
Thasou  
Thessalonikis  
Thiras  
Thivon  
Thyamidos  
Tinou  
Trifylias  
Trihonidos  
Trikalon  
Troizinias  
Tyrnavou  
Valtou  
Viannou  
Visaltias  
Voiou  
Volou  
Vonitsis & Xiromerou  
Xanthi  
Ydras  
Zakynthou

**Capital City**

Serrai  
Hora Sfakion  
Sidirokastron  
Siteia  
Skopelos  
Soufion  
Paramythia  
Ermoupolis  
Irakleion  
Thasos  
Thessaloniki  
Thira  
Thivai  
Igoumenitsa  
Tinos  
Kyparissia  
Agrinion  
Trikala  
Poros  
Tyrnavos  
Amfilohia  
Peukos  
Nigrita  
Siatista  
Volos  
Vonitsa  
Xanthi  
Ydra  
Zakynthos



**The Archaeological Museum in Athens**